WORKSHEET 11 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

The traps of anxious thinking

Spotting the most common thinking errors

AIM

Help the person recognise the typical forms their anxious thoughts take, so that they can spot them sooner and step back from them.

WHO IT IS FOR

Anxiety, rumination, self-criticism. Adults and adolescents.

DURATION

15-20 min in session

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Introduce the six traps on page 2 with an example from the person's life.
2. Go back over thoughts noted in the diary (worksheet 07) and look for the trap or traps together.
3. Emphasise: one thought can contain several traps, and everyone falls into them.
4. Suggest noting the traps spotted during the week, with a more balanced wording.

POINTS TO WATCH

> This is not about "correcting" every thought or swapping a negative thought for a positive one. If the person uses the list to criticise themselves ("another trap!"), go back to an attitude of curiosity.

REFERENCES

Beck, J. S. (2020). Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Basics and Beyond (3rd ed.). Guilford.

Clark, D. A. & Beck, A. T. (2010). Cognitive Therapy of Anxiety Disorders: Science and Practice. Guilford.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 11 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

The traps of anxious thinking

Anxiety often uses the same shortcuts. Recognising them helps you not to confuse them with reality. Here are the six most common ones.

1. Catastrophising: imagining the worst (“this is going to end badly”). “What if…?”: stringing scenarios together.
2. Mind reading: “she thinks I’m useless”. Fortune telling: “I’m going to fail”.
3. All or nothing: “if it isn’t perfect, it’s a failure”. “Musts”: rigid rules for yourself.
4. For each thought, note the trap and a more balanced version, not necessarily a positive one.

Thought	Trap(s)	More balanced version

The trap I fall into most often:

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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